

In the month of August, 1976 immediately after a storm, a number of pearl oysters were washed ashore on the Malvan beach. It was reported that at least over a thousand oysters were washed ashore which were subsequently picked up by local people for eating. A subsequent visit to the place yielded 27 shells of pearl oysters belonging to the species *Pinctada chemnitzii* (Philippi).

*Pinctada chemnitzii* was described by Philippi (1849) from the China sea and Prashad & Bhaduri (1933) first recorded its occurrence

on the Indian coast. Along the Indian coast, the species is known to occur (Rao 1970) in Tranquebar, Madras Harbour, Tuticorin pearl beds in the Gulf of Mannar, in Palk Bay and off Balasore coast (Orissa). The Malvan Collection is the first record of this species from West Coast of India. Besides India, it has been recorded from Ceylon, Aden, Mergui Archipelago, Penang, Indonesian group of islands, Australia, Hong Kong, Philippines, China sea and Japan.

I am thankful to Dr. Alagarwami for kindly confirming the identity of the species.

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26. OCCURRENCE OF PEARLS IN THE INDIAN BACKWATER OYSTER  
*CRASSOSTREA MADRASENSIS* (PRESTON)

Although 22 species of marine bivalves are known to produce pearls (Bolman 1941; Alexander 1951; Cooke 1959; Alagarwamy 1965), formation of pearls in edible oysters appears to be rare. About 40 species of edible oysters occur in different parts of the world, but the only instance of pearl formation reported so far is in the European oyster *Ostrea edulis* (Bolman, loc. cit). This note reports the occurrence of pearls in the Indian backwater oyster, *Crassostrea madrasensis* (Preston).

During the course of an investigation on the biology of *C. madrasensis* from the Mulki estuary, South Kanara, three specimens of oysters were observed to have tiny pearls lodged in pearl sacs formed in the mantle. In the first specimen, 99 mm shell height, collected on 20-1-1976, a black pearl, 1 mm in diameter, was found in the pearl sac situated at the ventral edge of the right lobe of the mantle. The pearl sac was completely closed. The pearl was more or less spherical and non-lustrous. A second specimen, 150 mm shell

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height, collected on 19.vii.1976, revealed a cream coloured pearl, 1.1 mm in diameter, lodged in the completely closed pearl sac situated in the mantle at the umbo region. The pearl was almost spherical, non-lustrous and porcellanous. A third specimen, 142 mm shell height, collected on 11.i.1977, had three fully closed pearl sacs, two at the umbo region and one in the right lobe of the mantle immediately above the digestive gland. Each pearl sac contained one pearl. The first two pearls, 2.2 mm and 2.3 mm in diameter respectively, were white, while the third, 2.6 mm in diameter, was cream coloured and with a black marking on the side facing the right

valve of the shell. All the three pearls were almost spherical and porcellanous.

From the seas around India, species of *Pinctada*, *Placuna* (Hornell 1909; Prashad & Bhaduri 1933), *Mytilus* (Jones 1950), *Gafrarium* and *Donax* (Alagarswamy 1965) were reported to produce pearls. Formation of pearls has been reported in the freshwater mussel *Lamellidens* (Hornell 1909) and the sacred chank *Xancus pyrum* (Hornell 1916). It is interesting to note that the formation of pearls in *C. madrasensis* is not very uncommon, as three specimens out of a total of 1,800 examined revealed the presence of pearls.

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